

MEATFARE SUNDAY -- JUDGMENT SUNDAY



*Icon of the Last Judgment*

## A REFLECTION ON OUR READINGS FOR THIS WEEKEND

On the fourth weekend of the sequence that prepares us for the Great Fast, our readings are taken from St. Paul's first Letter to the Corinthians and Matthew's Gospel. They present a rather interesting combination of ideas and thoughts.

Paul shares what he regards as "practical rules" for living. He stresses that "eating" or "not eating" isn't what is important. The self-discipline that fasting requires is what is important. Fasting helps us focus our attention on building our relationship with God. God really doesn't care whether we fast or not.

The section from Matthew's Gospel has been produced by ecclesiastical expansions of the sayings of Jesus. The designation as "The Last Judgment" is somewhat misleading. It is an imaginative scene in which is set the core of the moral teaching of Jesus. It has no parallel in the other Gospels and it doesn't make a "Last Judgment" a dogmatic fact. That faith is not mentioned should lead to no theological conclusions. What this imaginative scene highlights is that for spiritual growth we must learn how to ever increase our unconditional love for others and to incorporate "corporal works of mercy" into our lives.

The corporal works of mercy are highlighted: helping and supporting others who are in need. These are



charitable actions by which we help our neighbors in their bodily needs. The corporal (bodily) works of mercy are typically identified as: feeding the hungry, giving drink to the thirsty, sheltering the homeless, clothing the naked, visiting the sick, visiting the prisoners, burying the dead and giving alms to the poor.

Performing such works of mercy is another way to observe the Great Fast which also requires self-discipline and fulfills one of Jesus' exhortations: "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you."

So as I thought about it, *love* is an essential part of personal change and transformation. I must learn how to love all others and, like Jesus, to extend myself in my world to helping and supporting my brothers and sisters, my fellowmen. Jesus placed great emphasis on learning how to treat others. His every action as a human was to extend love, help and support to others in need. Think about this and prepare yourself for Lent.

# VARIOUS WAYS TO OBSERVE THE GREAT FAST

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Our religious *tradition* encourages us to integrate some sort of *fasting* into our lives during the Great Fast. Why? To help us focus more intensely on our spiritual growth. Spirituality must not be viewed as something that does not concern the body. Spirituality is something that is made possible through and within the body. The desires and needs of the flesh can all too often overpower the spirit. Fasting is a means of restoring balance between soul and body - a means of bringing the flesh under the control and will of the mind and spirit.

## Recommended Minimal Effort

- Abstain from meat and dairy products on the first day of the Fast (*February 24th*) and Great and Good Friday (*April 10th*)
- Abstain from meat on **All Fridays** of Lent and Holy Saturday (*April 11th*)

***In order to enter into the spirit of the Great Fast this is seen as a minimal effort***

## A Strict Lenten Tradition

- Abstain from *meat products*, even weekends, the day after Meat Fare (*February 16th*) until after Easter services (*April 12th*)
- Abstain from *daily products*, even weekends, the day after Cheese Fare (*February 23rd*) until after Easter services (*April 12th*)

***This is seen as the most traditional way to observe the Great Fast***



## Modified Strict Lenten Tradition

A *modified version* of the strict tradition calls for us, in addition to the *minimal effort* suggested, to *abstain from meat* on all Wednesdays and Fridays of Lent and all the days of Great and Holy Week (*April 5-11*) and pray more frequently.

However we observe the Great Fast, it should never be done out of a feeling of *obligation*. In order to benefit from this time, we have to freely embrace practices that can help us to spiritually grow (*the emphasis is placed on FREELY*).

As we have already seen in the weekends of preparation for the Great Fast, we have to *desire* to become more like Jesus - we have to *desire* to spiritually grow and want to return to our Heavenly Father's house.

There may be many reasons why a person can't observe the Great Fast in either a *minimal* or *strict* way (*i.e., age, health*). Your effort is something that must be between you and God. If we are honest and sincere with God, He accepts our decision on how we observe the Great Fast.

***Our main purpose of the Great Fast is to build our relationship with God!***

## GROWTH IN THE SPIRITUAL LIFE

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As I ended the last issue of this article on growth in the spiritual life, I suggested that basic faith is connected to “infancy” in the Christian life, not maturity. People who are infants in Christ are not simply unaware of the higher doctrines of Christianity. They actually live at the level of the body, or “flesh”, unaffected by the Spirit of God within them. The God-given order of human behavior is that the body be under the direction of the mind (soul) and the mind be governed by the spirit. Here the same true description of man is employed. The spiritual infant is described as a person who lives carelessly on the bodily or fleshly level, not yet even functioning under the direction of the soul/mind.

Following the example of St. Paul in the new Testament, we can draw a rough parallel between the stages of the physical life and the dimensions of spiritual maturity. We are born again to God in baptism. In spiritual infancy, we learn the basics of Christian teachings and practice. We mature as the focus of attention of our spiritual effort shifts from being body-centered, to being soul (mind) centered, to being spirit (heart) centered. Actually, we are integrating these dimensions. As, by

God’s grace, we gain control of ourselves as fleshly creatures, we submit our bodily nature to the mind/soul/reason (or integrate it properly, depending on our perspective). Then we gain control of ourselves as rational/thinking creatures, submitting this to the direction of the spirit/heart; and finally, submitting our spiritual/heart nature totally to the direction of the Holy Spirit of God.

So growth in the spiritual life is very similar, in many ways, to physical, emotional and psychological growth. Again, we have to become aware, at a real level, of who we are in God’s creation. We have to reflect upon our lives and decide that this earthly life has

been given to us in order to provide us with the opportunities and challenges to grow - to transform ourselves and to change the way we think and live.

God’s plan is quite unique. He gives us life. But the life He gives us requires that we work at “growing” and “changing” the way we think and behave. It requires us to FREELY embrace a journey of change. The process, however, is designed to have us come to a deep understanding of how absolutely deep the love of the Creator has for us. ***Think about this.***



# St. Michael's Parish News

A Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church in Dearborn Michigan



## THE GREAT FAST BEGINS

Monday February 24th

Now is when we truly begin the Great Fast. Now is the time to decide how you will spend the next 40 days. The two weeks before the Fast are Meatfare and Cheesefare. What do they mean to you? Is there a connection?

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## LENTEN SERVICES

Fridays: Presanctified @ 7:00 PM

Sundays: Lenten Matins @ 9:30 AM

Sundays: Basil's Liturgy @ 10:00 AM

We anticipate Lenten Matins to be about 20 minutes long.

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***If you worry about what might be, and wonder what might have been, you will ignore what is.***

## THE NEW LIFE

I would ask you, my readers this simple and yet challenging question: *What does religion really mean to you?* Is it really something that you embrace in order to find the meaning and purpose of your life? Is it truly something that helps you deal with earthly life? Does your religion help you embrace a way of living that is different than if you didn't belong to a religion?



Religion is not something magical! It is not a set of rules! It is not meant to be "ETERNAL LIFE INSURANCE." It is meant, however, to help you discover the meaning and purpose of your life - it is meant to help you work toward achieving the "best version of yourself." It is meant to transform you - to change the way you think and live.

The question is: *Is your religion helping you to achieve this? Is your religion helping you to come to a deeper understanding of yourself?* If it isn't, then there is something wrong. Religion is supposed to help us grow and discover the meaning of life. It is meant to

(Continued on page 8)

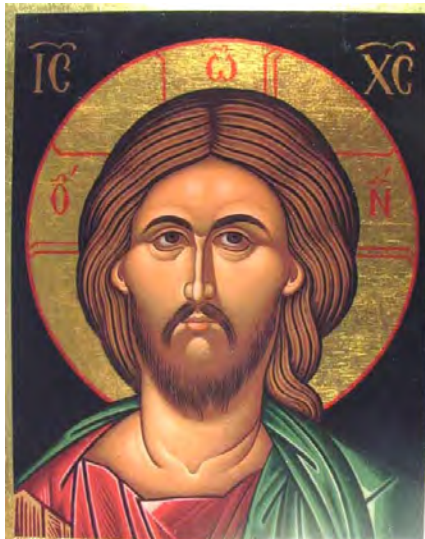
## THIS IS MY BELOVED SON

I am sharing this article because it is my hope that my readers might come to a deeper and more realistic understanding of the Person of Jesus, the Christ. His life, how He lived it and what the way He lived brought about His personal transfiguration, is a model for us. We are called to go through the same process here and now.

The transfiguration of Jesus is the other biblical moment where we can see signs of the simultaneous revelation of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. What might this connection mean? Both events (i.e., Baptism and of course the Transfiguration) imply a significant change. There is a distinct connection between the Baptism of Jesus and our own spiritual life, which also starts with a public event of baptism. The rest of our lives are about fulfilling and understanding what happened in that public event. The transition from Baptism toward Transfiguration suggests an internal, mystical path of transformation. What is between our baptism and our spiritual transfiguration in Christ is a life of prayer.

In the same way the Father was manifested in the Baptism of Jesus, he is now manifested in his Transfiguration. And the Father's command to "listen to him" carries a meaning that takes us one step beyond the revelation of the Baptism. Here the words designate Jesus as the living incarnate Word, the reflection and image of the Father.

The difference between the Baptism and the Transfiguration on this point is that while the first was a public event, open for all to see, the latter was an event that took place in front of the three chosen disciples and in front of the Old Testament prophets. The Baptism of Christ



outlines the salvation of humankind as all three persons of the Trinity working together, and thus it *invites* people to the Church. Our baptism is the response to the invitation of Christ, and the beginning of our life in him. On the other hand, the Transfiguration of Christ takes place in front of a few people only, followers of Jesus, or those residing with God, according to the biblical expression, "in the bosom of Abraham." The Transfiguration of Jesus demonstrates salvation as it happens mystically, sacramentally, *inside* the church.

Both events speak to the journey of our lives. We are baptized. We are called to change and transfigure ourselves into true children of our Heavenly Father.

# CHRIST, TRUE GOD and TRUE MAN

Perhaps one of the greatest challenges that the Christian Church has had to face is coming to a genuine and true understanding of Who Jesus, the Christ, really is. It was a great struggle. The Church intuitively knew that Jesus was more than just a “special man” who seemed to be able to do wondrous deeds. He was a man, of that there was no doubt. He lived in time and was known by other men. But there was still something very special about Him. So the Church struggled with the fact of WHO JESUS REALLY IS! Her struggles resulted in her coming to a consensus that Jesus is FULLY AND TRULY GOD while being FULLY AND TRULY MAN. This was a monumental declaration.

Using Greek philosophy, she, the Church, declared finally that the PERSON OF THE SON OF GOD, the Christ, has two natures: divine and human but that the Person of Jesus, the Christ, functioned, as a human being and that His human nature was not forced to respond in a special way to human events. Although God, He was also a Man. What history tells us about His life is based on decisions that He made as a human being (this has to be true otherwise we could not be called to imitate Him).

Human beings have found it hard to accept and understand this truth. Why? Because if He acted in accord with His human nature, then we are called to imitate Him. That calls all of us who believe in Him to a higher calling. We are called to learn to be LIKE HIM.

This, of course, isn't easy because it calls us to unconditionally love all others regardless of how they treat or respond to us. It also calls us to desire to live in a certain way so that we might become true children of God. When we



live like Jesus lived, we change and become more like the persons that God intended when He called us into existence. When we begin to live in accord with our faith and principles, then we change and become the persons that God intended when He created us.

Unfortunately our natural tendencies are to respond to others as they respond to us. We must learn how to respond to others as we would have them respond to us, not as they actually do. Why? When we live this way, we are changed! We are transformed! We become who God intended.

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### **LITURGY SCHEDULE**

**Sundays @ 10:00 AM**  
Ukrainian & English

**Weekdays @ 8:00 AM**  
English

### **SACRAMENTS**

**Penance**  
By Appointment

**Baptism & Matrimony**  
In most instances membership  
required for six months

**Funerals**  
Membership of an immediate family  
member required

### **Parish Life Council**

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Rev Deacon Leonard Mier  
313.584-6795

Greg & Esther Petrovich  
734.453-4354

Rafic Vawter  
313.624.9867

# SCHEDULE OF SERVICES

**Sunday, February 16 - Weekend of Meat Fare**  
**10:00 AM + Special Intention**

## **37th WEEK AFTER PENTECOST - TONE 4**

**Monday, February 17 - Theodore the Recruit, Great-Martyr**  
*No Service Scheduled*

**Tuesday, February 18 - Leo the Great, Pope**  
*No Service Scheduled*

**Wednesday, February 19 - Archippus, Apostle**  
*No Service Scheduled*

**Thursday, February 20 - Leo of Catania, Bishop**  
*No Service Scheduled*

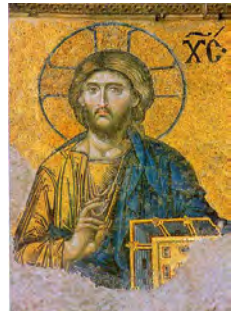
**Friday, February 21 - Timothy, Venerable**  
*No Service Scheduled*

**Saturday, February 22 - All Holy Ascetical Fathers & Mothers**  
*No Service Scheduled*

**Sunday, February 23 - Weekend of Cheesefare - Tone 4**  
**10:00 AM + Special Intention**

*(Continued from page 5 - The New Life)*  
provide us with the knowledge and tools to achieve this goal. Religion is not about "appeasing" a vengeful and angry God. It is about supporting us in our spiritual growth.

One of the things that I have discovered after 53 years as a priest, many people want to make God in their image and likeness - want God to respond to life the way that they do. God is far greater than anything that we can conceive. If we think we know how God will act or think, we can be sure we are wrong. He is beyond our comprehension and understanding. If you find yourself thinking that you know how God will act, especially when it comes to evil people in the world, you will be wrong. We don't and can't understand how He will handle evil persons and it is much better if we don't attempt to project our way of doing things on Him.



<http://www.stmichaelarchangel.org> - and - [Facebook.com/stmichaelugccdbn](https://www.facebook.com/stmichaelugccdbn)



# THE COURAGE TO PRAY

What the author I am using for this article was trying to express, as seen in the last issue of this article, is that the Gospels can be used to help stimulate prayer. We must remember, however, that the gospels are not a succession of external commandments but, rather, a whole gallery of internal portraits.

There are passages of the gospel which make our hearts burn, which give light to our intelligence and shake up our will. They give life and strength to our whole physical and moral being. These passages reveal the points where God and his image in us already coincide, the stage we have already reached, perhaps only momentarily, fleetingly, in becoming what we are called to be. We should then note these passages even more carefully. They are the points at which God's image is already present in us. And from these beginnings we can strive to continue our transformation into the person we feel we want and ought to be. We must be faithful to these revelations. In this at least we must always be faithful. If we do this these passages increase in number, the demands of the gospel become fuller and more precise, slowly the fogs disperse and we see the image of the person we should be. Then we can begin standing before God in truth. However as well as this essential fundamental truth, there is also the partial truth of the moment.

How often our prayer is false because we try to present ourselves to God not as we are, but as we imagine he wants us to be. We come to him in our Sunday best or in borrowed finery. It is important that before we start to pray we should take time to recollect ourselves, to reflect and become aware of the real state in



which we present ourselves to the Lord. “My heart is ready, Lord, my heart is ready,” we can say.

But too often we drag ourselves into God's presence by a dour effort of will. We are doing a “duty” with no heart in it. We force ourselves to appear to be what we know we are deep down but do not at the moment feel. The living waters have sunk in dry sands. We should tell this to God who is the truth. “Lord I come to you with a dry heart, but I am forcing myself to stand before you because of a deep conviction. Help me to desire to enter into communication with You and leave it at that.

# ST BASIL'S THOUGHTS ON GENESIS



## ST BASIL THE GREAT

I realize this has been a long and, perhaps even tedious, article. I continue to share this information because I would have my readers understand that Genesis is not “history” or an “exact presentation” of how God went about bringing creation into existence. Most “fundamental Christians” want to believe that God dictated this book to Moses and therefore it is the absolute, concrete truth. The only truth is the “GOD IS THE SOURCE OF ALL CREATION and BROUGHT ABOUT IN A MANNER THAT HE SAW FIT”.

In the poetic description of woman’s creation, we read that God took one of man’s sides as

the raw material for the woman. The word for side here is *tsela*, often translated as “rib”. It is the word used to denote the side of the ark or the side of a hill. In fact nowhere else in the Old Testament is *tsela* rendered “rib,” and it seems this rendering was preferred because the translators balked at what the text actually implies - namely that Yahweh split the man in half and used one half for the creation of the woman. Such surgery would seem too radical to be historically accurate, and so the translators opted for God taking a single rib - a less radical medical procedure. But the text affirms that Yahweh took an entire side from the man - that is, half of him - to create woman. It was this side (or, if one prefers, this aspect) that God built into a woman. The word rendered built is the Hebrew *banah*, indicating that the resultant creation was strong, durable, lasting. It is the same word used in Psalm 127:1 for the laborer building his house.

Then came the dramatic moment of presentation. As Yahweh had brought to the man each of the animals, and it was discovered that none of them would suffice as a helper fit for the man, so He brought the woman to the man also. And here at last was what he was looking for. The man ecstatically exclaimed in discovery, “This one, this time, is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh!” After so many failures, finally, this time, success.

Much more goes into understanding the Sacred Scriptures - both Old and New - than just a reading of them. Hopefully this is beginning to make sense.



# THE EASTERN HERALD

## СХІДНИЙ ВІСНИК

The Weekly Newsletter of Very Reverend Canon Wayne J. Ruchgy, Ph.D.  
Vol. 67 No 7      WEEKEND OF MEATFARE      February 15-21, 2020

### THE SPIRITUALITY OF THE CHRISTIAN EAST

Our Eastern Spirituality calls us to freely become involved in spiritual transformation and change. Why? Because this is the real meaning and purpose of this earthly life. He created us in His image as seen in the Person of Jesus and infused in us the potential for growing in the likeness of Jesus. He did not, however, demand that we try to actualize this potential since He created us as “free” beings - beings like Him in so far as we can exercise free will. So why did He do this? He did it because He loves us and, because of His love, He wants us to learn how to freely love Him in return. Isn't that what every good parent does? He didn't create slaves or robots. He created free-will men and women and then came Himself to show us how we might achieve our potential to be ever more like one of His children.

He did not “threaten” us with punishment if we do not embrace this task of personal change. He showed us

His love with the belief that if we truly understand how very much He loves us, we will desire to change our hearts and minds and to become ever-more like Jesus.

The biggest question in my mind is this: *If I only act out of fear of being punished, will I truly change my heart and mind?* The change of heart and mind has to be something that is freely chosen and truly embraced.



What does it mean to change my heart and mind? It means that I work to understand the true purpose and meaning of my life. Once I am convinced that the true purpose and meaning of my life is to “transform” and “change” myself, then, I believe I can begin to more fully understand how very much I am loved by my heavenly Father and Creator.

So ask yourself: *What do I currently see as the meaning and purpose of my earthly life?* Then, attempt to come up with a good answer.

### *He Will Separate Them*

“And he will separate them one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats.” So then, people on earth are intermingled, and not only intermingled in that the righteous live side by side with the wicked, but they are also indistinguishable. Between the righteous and the wicked there is no apparent difference. Even as in wintertime you cannot tell the healthy trees apart from the withered trees but in beautiful springtime you can tell the difference, so too each person according to his faith and his works will be exposed.

The wicked will not have any leaves or show any fruit, but the righteous will be clothed

with the leaves of eternal life and adorned with the fruit of glory. In this way they will be separated by the heavenly shepherd and Lord. The earthly shepherd separates animals by their type of body, whereas Christ separates people by their type of soul. The sheep signify righteous people by reason of their gentleness, because they harm no one, and by reason of their patience, because when they are harmed by others, they bear it without resistance. He refers to sinners as goats, however, because these vices characterize goats: capriciousness toward other animals, pride and belligerence.

*From a Homily,  
Incomplete Work on Matthew*